



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Open Burning

Open burning is simply defined as burning anything outside.

Open burning presents a risk to people's health and the environment. Open burning, depending on the circumstances, may be illegal and is always discouraged.

Given that, South Carolina revised its open burning regulation to protect air quality and the public's health. Homeowners may burn yard trimmings, if allowed by local ordinances. Other allowed open burning includes fireplaces, campfires, outdoor barbecues and bonfires. But burn barrels, which have been used as a means of disposing of household garbage, are no longer allowed.

It is against the law to burn household garbage and trash in South Carolina. Items that cannot be burned include, but are not limited to: paper and cardboard; roofing materials such as shingles and tar; motor and waste heating oil; tires and other rubber products; plastic; paint; household cleaners; farm chemicals; electrical wire; as well as insulation and duct work. Substantial fines can be assessed even for first-time violations for burning these items.

Open burning also may be hazardous to your health and the health of your neighbors. Burning garbage in barrels releases toxic pollutants and contaminated particles directly into the air without being filtered

or treated. Open burning is particularly dangerous because it releases pollutants at ground level where they are more readily inhaled. The closer you are to burning trash, the greater the risk of inhaling dangerous pollutants.



Open burning also produces ash that can contain toxic metals such as mercury, lead, chromium and arsenic.

Some people are unaware of the potential danger and scatter the ash in their gardens or bury it. Garden vegetables can absorb and accumulate these metals. Children playing in the yard can swallow soil containing these metals.

Additionally, open burning may endanger property. It is a frequent cause of brush, residential and forest fires particularly during drought conditions. Instead of burning household garbage, dispose of it properly. Better yet, recycle and compost what you can.

Don't burn. Do the right thing.

Clearly, backyard burning poses many threats. Have your household garbage picked up by a commercial waste hauler or take it to a local drop-off center. Better yet, remember to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Reduce the amount of waste you make. Buy items in bulk or economy sizes. Buy products that can be reused or refilled. Buy reusable products instead of disposal products.

Attention Commercial and Residential Builders ...

It is against the law to burn any waste from **commercial** construction sites. At **residential** construction sites, it is against the law to burn materials other than clean wood waste. Clean wood waste from residential construction sites, however, cannot be burned during ground-level ozone season (April 1 through October 30) in South Carolina.

Reduce waste by reusing. Reusing items – by repairing them, finding new uses for them, donating them to community groups or selling them – reduces waste. Clothing, for example, can be taken to thrift stores and non-profit organizations and be reused. Grocery bags can be reused.

Recycle – it's easy. Each of the state's 46 counties has recycling opportunities. Many South Carolina communities have curbside recycling programs and there are more than 600 recycling drop-off sites throughout the state. Aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles, steel cans and newspapers can be recycled. Magazines, office paper and advertising mail can be recycled. Cardboard is a valuable commodity – local recycling programs want and need cardboard. It's easy to recycle used motor oil, too – with more than 800 collection locations throughout the state.

What about yard trimmings?

Homeowners generally can burn yard trimmings such as leaves and twigs if local ordinances allow it and it does not cause a public nuisance. Still, the burning of this material can be unhealthy and pose a risk to the environment and property. Many municipalities provide a service to pick up yard trimmings. Residents are encouraged to use these services and not burn the material.

Here is something you can do in your backyard – composting. Food scraps and yard trimmings can be turned into a valuable product that provides many benefits including saving you money by providing a valuable product (compost) and reducing the need for commercial fertilizers and pesticides. Here's the dirt on composting. It's simple to do. All you need is a little time, a little space, a bin and a basic understanding of the composting process.



Consider grasscycling. That's recycling your grass clippings by leaving them on your yard instead of collecting them for disposal. The clippings contain natural nutrients that decompose and act as a natural fertilizer reducing the need to by commercial fertilizers.

For More Information ...

The S.C. Forestry Commission regulates certain types of outdoor burning. Visit www.state.sc.us/forest/fyard.htm for a toll-free number to call the commission regarding residential burning. Local ordinances may apply to outdoor burning. Residents also should check with their local government.

The state regulation on open burning is available at www.scdhec.gov/environment/baq/docs/regs/pdf/R61-62_2.PDF. For more information on open burning, call the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Bureau of Air Quality at (803) 898-4123.

Visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle or call DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office) at **1-800-768-7348** for more information about waste reduction, recycling and composting.

For more information about waste reduction at home visit www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/waste_reduction_home.pdf.

For more information about composting, visit www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/backyard_composting.pdf.

Visit www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/grasscycling.pdf for grasscycling information.

Visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle and click on county programs or call the Office at **1-800-768-7348** for the recycling location nearest you.



Office of Solid Waste
Reduction & Recycling

1-800-768-7348 • www.scdhec.gov/recycle

DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at www.scdhec.gov/recycle. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.